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Spring & Summer Style Issue

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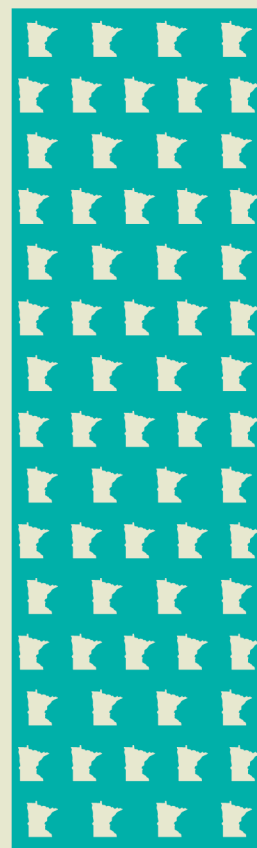


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Photo by Hubert Bonnet



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CORRECTIONS FOR ISSUE 490:

Fashion credits were misattributed; the fashions in these images were designed by Laura Fulk (left) and Tim Navarro (right).



MartinPatrick3 should have been credited as the source of the Ted Baker Shirt, Moods of Norway Jacket, and Gitman Vintage Shorts seen on Trek:





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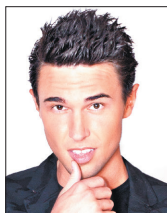
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Style, Lifestyle, and Identity

I confessed that I don't pay much attention to what's fashionable or stylish a few issues ago, which was unfair of me. It's easier to say that I don't pay attention to style than it is to explain how I pay attention to style. I notice people first, and what they're presenting, second. Labels don't get on my radar unless I'm seeing the person attached to them; this person designed this piece. Accessories register as punctuation in a person's paragraph. Shoes make them taller or unstable or sturdy or reflective. A jacket too short for the suitcoat beneath it makes the person appear a little scattered or unaware.

What a person is wearing only registers with me when it is made significant by the person wearing it.

In the GLBTQ community, A butch presents differently than a femme, but nothing presented allows for assumptions to be made because everyone is allowed to self-identify. Jewelry on men means nothing significant in this day and age, whereas some of it used to indicate membership in this community, both stereotypically and accurately. Punk hair colors and tattoos might mean a person is queer, or just a fan of the look. Colors of leather and latex and hankies (and the Pride flags that go with them) can indicate where someone falls in different groups according to preferences and kink involvement. Beards and bellies on men, and their different ages and sizes, can signify bears, cubs, otters, and the like. Dykes on Bikes might include lesbians as well as transgender people.

When is something considered style and when is it a symbol of belonging to a subculture?

Back in 2002, I pulled a book off a shelf at what was probably a Patina or Bibelot book section; it looks more gifty than book-like: *The Art and Power of Being a Lady* by Noelle Cleary and Dini Von Mueffling. At the time, I believe I was fundraising for orphans and was probably interested in tearing it apart with my Women's & Gender Studies major that had been getting dusty on the shelf since graduating from college three years earlier. The word "lady" had never been associated with "power" in my vernacular. Furthermore, I was constructed to find it absurd to want to buy what looked to be a self-help book about becoming a lady, let alone an powerful lady. Would I have to wear pink? Are pantyhose a requirement? Just what did this club require?

As it turns out, I bought the book. It has stayed on my shelf for every move I've made and it's on my table as I write this piece, propped open to the chapter on style. The book is more progressive than I had imagined, basing itself on such a throwback term as "lady." Despite moving away from gender norms, boxes, and stereotypes, it puts the power in my hands to determine where I'd like to fit in as a woman. And, "lady" is somewhat open to interpretation even though the whole book is based on the word; I find that one could substitute "gentleman" or just plain "decent human being" throughout the piece as it talks about manners and how we treat each other. What's stuck with me the most through the years is its discussion of style, though. Every lady has style, but it doesn't all look the same. Classics are chosen over trend, though trend can be incorporated. Overdressing for an occasion is preferred to underdressing as it gives the host the benefit of the doubt that the event should be held in higher esteem than erring toward too casual of an approach. A lady has a "trademark" piece or look

that can always be expected of her (mine is probably a dark-framed pair of glasses, likely accompanied by Aveda blonde hair). Lastly, the best accessory is confidence, which is echoed by the sentiments of our style subjects in this issue, Richard, Ben, and Mayda.

Do I want to be a lady? Oh, let me tell you, that's open for debate on any given day. Do I want to be a decent human being? Every damn day. So, it's about the nuances between what is style and what is lifestyle. Style might be more about how we appear, lifestyle is likely more about how we conduct our affairs and lives. "Lifestyle" is a loaded term in this community as being gay, lesbian, bi, trans, or queer has been perverted into being a "lifestyle choice" by the people who seek to marginalize this group. But, what about lifestyle in its pure, unadulterated form? Can "lifestyle" be reclaimed as something that is empowering, just like "lady" has been?

It's something to note that there are two instances in this issue that refer to "passing" in the transgender community. I've heard that it was a topic mentioned during Q&A with Janet Mock at the Macalester College SPEAK! function (Lavender Lens, page 16), that things might be easier for Mock since she "passes" so well as a beautiful woman. Then, Ellie Krug refers to "passing" as something that occurred to her, but never would have occurred to her as being something that could happen, in her column called "Oasis" (Skirting the Issues, page 58). When you consider that transitioning from one sexual identity to another, much has to do with appearance and style, and, likely, lifestyle.

Whereas it all starts so simple with an issue on Spring & Summer Style, it all branches into a tall and wide tree or arbor in a forest of diversity. The issue can be as simple or complex as we want it to be—it's all self-defined. Or, it should be...though we can all agree that plenty of judgment and snap assumptions are made based on how we present ourselves.

Rather than answer many questions, I'm left with an abundance. Where do you see yourself in this conversation? Do you fall into a category of style that matches your lifestyle? Do you reject the terms "lady," "gentleman," or "lifestyle?" Are you a person who shows your pride in your culture by wearing your colors? Did you pierce your right ear back in the '80s to specifically indicate that you belonged to this community? Do you split lesbians into "butch" and "femme?" Do you have a trademark accessory that you always include? I'm interested. Please share with me at editor@lavendermagazine.com. I would very much appreciate it. ■



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Bill 1062: "Controversial Anti-Gay" or "Pro Religious Freedom"?

At this writing, Arizona governor Jan Brewer has vetoed State Senate Bill 1062, a piece of legislation supposedly designed to add protection for the religious freedom of individuals and businesses by allowing them to refuse service to gays. Or, whoever they assumed to be gay.

As much as one wants to celebrate, to believe 1062 was just another bubble rising from the boiling cauldron of fundamentalist intolerance, now dissipated, it is not that simple. Hold your huzzahs.

Waiting in the wings is Pennsylvania State Representative Gordon Denlinger (R) who intends to introduce his own gay discrimination bill, and Texas governor Rick Perry, poised to battle U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia's ruling, mere hours before Brewer's veto, that the Texas ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional.

The root of the legislation was not—as the legislators insisted—constituents' religious freedom, but the unleashing of intolerance. Specifically, 1062 targeted gays, but it was so broadly, fuzzily worded that it would have bled back into embracing every other prejudice this country has worked so hard and long to extirpate.

If a restaurant server can use "religious freedom" to refuse a gay couple service (are all same-sex couples dining together gay?), a

Muslim restaurant owner could refuse service to unveiled women; Catholics refuse Baptists who do not believe in transubstantiation; white servers refuse blacks at their lunch counters.

In the end, 1062 was overturned not because it was, in Jon Stewart's words, "morally repugnant", but rather as *New Yorker* columnist Andy Borowitz explained, because Arizonans confronted "the awkward realization that gays buy stuff."

None of those claiming their religious rights are being trampled acknowledges that large numbers of GLBT individuals also frequent churches, temples, or mosques, and many churches of their own faiths now embrace openly gay clergy. Do the Arizona, Texas, and Pennsylvania lawmakers truly believe that people of faith are threatening their own religious beliefs?

Bigotry is bigotry, continuing to work throughout our country in its Hydra-headed forms: sexual, religious, racial. In February, three Ole Miss students put a noose around a statue of James Meredith—their university's first black student whose enrollment in 1962 precipitated riots. America has by no means eradicated racism: the anti-gays are just gearing up, using "endangered religious freedom" as their battle cry. ■

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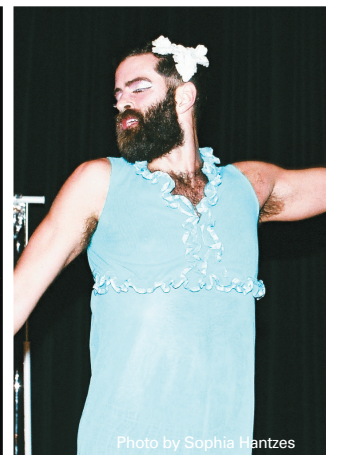
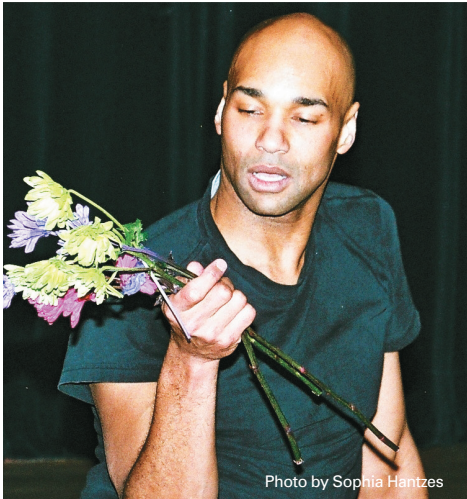
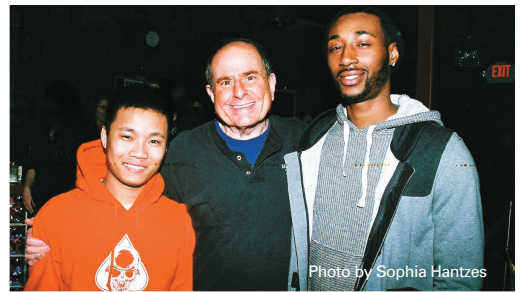
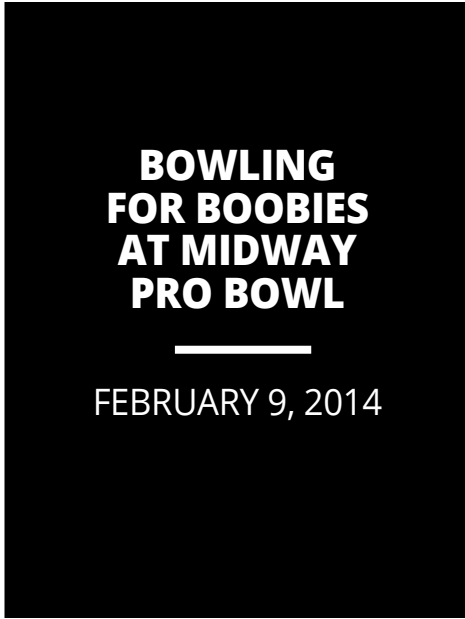
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OUR LAVENDER

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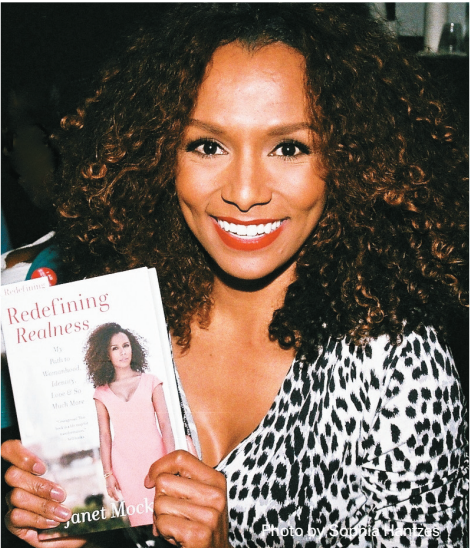
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OUR SCENE

ARTS & CULTURE | BY ELLEN KRUG

Music and Muscles



Photo courtesy of Call for Justice

If there's one evening in April to keep open, it's April 10th when the rising stars—and adorable hunks—of the string quartet Well-Strung perform at the Illusion Theater as the highlight of a fundraiser for Call for Justice, LLC.

Maybe you've never heard of Well-Strung. If that's the case, this will be your chance to see and hear something incredibly unique—the classical music of Mozart and Vivaldi mixed with the pop of Kelly Clarkson and Lady Gaga.

Yes, that's different. But it works all so well.

I stumbled onto Well-Strung last September on what was the final performance of their summer-long run in Provincetown on Cape Cod. I knew nothing about the group, but their moniker was enough reason to ante up for a ticket. What followed was a performance that kept me grinning for an hour and wanting to share the experience with my friends back home in the Twin Cities.

As good as their music is, "the boys" aren't bad on the eyes, either. My sweet dears Edmund (Bagnell), Chris (Marchant), Daniel (Shevlin) and Trevor (Wadleigh) are buff and built; their bows aren't the only things that flex when they play.

If it sounds like I'm swooning, it's because I am.

This will be Well-Strung's Minneapolis premiere. We're catching them on the upswing, too—the quartet recently completed a European tour where they were hailed as "absolutely amazing" by BBC Radio host Jo Good after their on-air performance. More recently, the quartet appeared on the Today Show. They're booking out months in advance and crisscrossing the country as they build upon a reputation for superb music and delightful audience banter.

In case that's not enough incentive, Well-Strung's visit to Minneapolis is for a good cause. Call for Justice, LLC, a small Twin Cities nonprofit that works to connect low-income people with legal resources, is hosting the group for its first-ever fundraiser.

Each year, tens of thousands of people—mothers trying to protect their children, families wanting safe apartments, persons fleeing abusive relationships—find themselves in need of legal assistance. All too often, there are too few resources to help.


Call for Justice ("C4J") helps make the legal system more responsive. It does this in part by creating collaborations which connect people with lawyers. Thus, C4J was instrumental in helping two Minneapolis law firms "adopt" the Jeremiah Program, which works to end intergenerational poverty in women and children.

C4J also trains United Way 2-1-1 Information and Referral on how to make better targeted legal referrals. YouTube views of those training videos (available to anyone at www.callforjustice.org) just surpassed the 15,000 mark (that's a 1,234% increase in views in the last seven months).

So why not listen to some great music, view some wonderful musicians, and do some good in the world?

Circle April 10 on your calendar. Doors at the Illusion open at 6 p.m. for cocktails (cash bar); seating for the program will begin at 6:45.

See you there! ■



Inferno

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The Scarecrow and His Servant. Photo by Dan Norman

MSP INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL: GLBT OFFERINGS

Through Apr. 19
St. Anthony Main Theater, 115 Main St., Mpls.
(612) 331-4724

This year you can expect some fascinating GLBT-centered films and finally, the internet and electronic media are really and truly scrutinized. Long overdue but how nice that it's happening. *InReal-Life* looks into both GLBT issues and internet omniscience. *Land of Storms* from Hungary is a hot and steamy but serious look at the love between a soccer player and two young masculine rural men. In *Tom at the Farm* from France a man is shut out of the grieving process when the man he loves dies. *The Dog* fleshes out that very sensational true story dramatized in the classic '70s film, *Dog Day Afternoon*, in which a bank robbery occurred in the service of financing a sex change operation.

Web Junkie examines the possibility of internet addiction as a clinical disorder. *Google & the World Brain* warns of Google Corporation's dubious quest to scan every book on the planet. Though he was not queer, Ingmar Bergman's films broke ground in the realm of gender and sexuality. The documentary, *Trespassing Bergman*, contains interviews with some superlative directors: Michael Haneke, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Yimou Zhang, Alexander Payne, Woody Allen, Francis Ford Coppola, Lars Von Trier, Ang Lee, and Claire Denis. Of course, in his time, Bergman

was hailed as the great 'women's director', so you are bound to hear fascinating comments from Isabella Rosellini, Harriet Anderson (a Bergman regular player), Laura Dern, Holly Hunter, and Pernilla August who played the nanny in Bergman's last and greatest theatrical feature, *Fanny and Alexander*.

NAKED DARROW

Through Apr. 12
Illusion Theater
528 Hennepin Av., Mpls.
(612) 339-4944
www.illusiontheater.org

Clarence Darrow (1857-1938) looms as a forerunner of modern progressive movements. Gay history knows him for his controversial defense of child killers, Leopold and Loeb, two young wealthy male lovers of wealth who brutally killed a boy for pure sport. He also defended American Railway Union leader Eugene Debs. Of course, Darrow is best known for the Scopes 'Monkey' Trial in Tennessee where he defended the right to teach Darwin's theory of evolution.

Actor/writer Gary Anderson will reprise his acclaimed solo play, which recently played Off-Broadway. The Illusion run of *Naked Darrow* will have various performances that will be followed by panels of legal experts to talk about the Darrow legacy. Two of the big issues the piece deals with are racism and the death penalty. So if those are issues important to you, you will find *Naked Darrow* and its panels to be a solid historical reference regarding those issues. And it's always good to get a historical perspective in our time of now, now, now!

THE SCARECROW AND HIS SERVANT

Through Apr. 6
Children's Theatre
2400 Third Av. S., Mpls.
(612) 874-0400
www.childrenstheatre.org

You may know Philip Pullman for *His Dark Materials* books and *The Golden Compass* which was made into a popular Nicole Kidman-Daniel Craig film. However, his lesser known, but still beloved book, *The Scarecrow and His Servant*, has been adapted into a ter-

rific stage production by the Twin Cities' most successful playwright, Jeffrey Hatcher. And if you think I'm overstating that, just have a look sometime at how many Hatcher plays are parts of theater seasons throughout the English-speaking world and you'll get my point.

Hatcher's version, directed by Peter Brosius with stage movement by Brian Sostek, emanates the commedia dell'arte style of stock characters from traveling acting troupes of Old Europe-Italy in particular- as well as echoes of Victorian melodrama. Though the play is a clear cut polemic against eco-terrorism by corporations in a war-driven economy, its quirky characters are located somewhere in the vaguely distant past. This may not soften the political message, but it makes it easier for conservatives to swallow. Nostalgia subversively melds with radicalism.

The scarecrow protagonist, embodied in a charmingly gangly and edifyingly spoken performance by the great Dean Holt, brings to mind Don Quixote and his glorious quest to end wrong and oppression wherever he goes. He walks on stilts throughout. But Scarecrow has a big advantage. He's not really alive so he can't be killed. However, he is tethered to a youth -or vice versa- named Jack (an effervescent Brandon Brooks) who is mortal and on the run from corrupt law enforcement. He is Quixote's Sancho Panza sidekick. But Jack has a major weakness: he has to eat. Something Scarecrow never has to worry about.

This pair of misfits bond in adversity and get to do wondrous things like take part in a theatrical production and see the world. Sadly, however, the hot pursuit by the law and the never ending wars almost break Jack's spirit. But this is where Scarecrow's unique and constantly upbeat perspective figures into creating solutions to what seem like life's insurmountable problems. Just when everything seems hopeless the most unlikely and creative solutions spirit forth.

This inspiring production is crisply acted by a crackling ensemble that plays multiple characters ranging from crows to desperately hungry and looting soldiers. Gerald Drake beguiles as a cryptic spokes-

man for corporate concerns. He looks like an aging version of one of the thugs in the Kubrick classic, *A Clockwork Orange*. In fact, some of the noses the ensemble wears brings that very 'non-children's' film to mind. Splendidly creepy to be sure.

Moreover, *The Scarecrow and His Servant* is worth catching just for the set. G.W. Mercier's design is a work of art in itself, enhancing the script brilliantly. It does not detract at all. It's as if the characters were destined to inhabit that set. A stand alone stage is at center with rural imagery in the background. When the curtain is open various pictorials are seen and switched throughout. It's reminiscent of a Magritte painting. In addition, Mercier designed the eclectic but unified costumes.

A SNOWPLOW NAMED DESIRE

Through Apr. 12

Brave New Workshop, 824 Hennepin Av. S., Mpls.

(612) 332-6620

www.bravenewworkshop.com

Something nice to report here: Melanie Wehrmacher has joined the Brave New Workshop ensemble and she fits in nicely. Their current revue doesn't bear much resemblance to the Tennessee Williams classic its title derives from but given that it opened during the fiercest winter in memory, it's perfectly suitable. However, the show does spoof the frustrated sexuality that one can always count on in a Williams play.

Here are some examples. An Edina couple hemmed in by sexual semi-consciousness lets go of their inhibitions. A mama penguin gets tired of (as in 'no longer attracted to') papa, leaving baby



The Things They Carried. Photo courtesy of The History Theatre



Lonely Soldiers. Photo by Scott Pakudaitis

penguin in the cold. You guessed it – Taj Ruler is as hilarious as ever as baby penguin. A sketch called *The Joy of Baking* shows the sexy side of pie-making. And Andy Hilbrands plays a cat who is just a little too possessive of his owner. His movement is oh-so-sensuously feline.

However, the show's best vignette is also the funniest portrayal actor Matt Erkel has ever given in a BNW revue. His character is Nikolai Gynecolovich, the Russian Father of Gynecology. It is his life's crusade to make sure people, especially high school students -male and female- have a holy appreciation of female sexuality. The reaction of the students and the teacher are priceless as he waxes profound on his field of interest. High-larious!

THE THINGS WE CARRIED IN REPERTORY WITH LONELY SOLDIERS: WOMEN AT WAR IN IRAQ

Through Apr. 6

History Theatre

30 E. 10th St., St. Paul

(651) 292-4323

www.historytheatre.com

Tim O'Brien, the acclaimed Vietnam era author, wrote the short story collection that *The Things We Carried* is based on. The splendid

Stephen D'Ambrose gives a moving solo performance. He benefits from Jim Stowell's stage adaptation which contains graphic imagery of war violence and the effects that come out of that: mutilated bodies, shattered souls. What's particularly notable about this play coming out now is that it flies in the face of the way Americans have come to treat violence as just an ordinary old thing. Aside from the continual regurgitation of adolescent male action flicks, porn, and video games, the theater itself has become an outpost of destructive adolescent immaturity. *The Book of Mormon*, perhaps the most popular current Big Musical, shamelessly makes fun of gruesome events of imperialism, war, and rape, and disturbingly, audiences, and worse yet, critics everywhere have praised it! Stowell's sensibility is the opposite. I call him noble.

The Things We Carried runs in repertory with *Lonely Soldiers: Women at War in Iraq* by Helen Benedict. It is drawn from interviews of eight women who have served in the military. The treatment of women in battle and back at the base have come under scrutiny since the Bush/Cheney years. Here's a play that can help us put some perspective on that, and perhaps some solutions. ■

Los Cabos, Mexico



EAT, DRINK AND PLAY

When Kurt came home from a charity event and told me he had won the winning bid for four nights at an all-inclusive resort in Los Cabos, Mexico, my first thought was, “Good, we don’t have to do a thing.” Isn’t that the beauty of travel, each trip can answer a different goal? Sometimes I like to learn something new, be active, explore, discover...but not always. Truth be told, doing nothing can be the best escape of all.

Best known as Cabo, this has become one of Mexico’s premier tourist destinations; a spot where the desert and the sea meet with several oases of world class resorts in between.

I’ve found the beauty of coming back to a place I’ve been before is that there is no urgency to have to see...and do...everything. And as my previous visits to Cabo revealed, there isn’t that much to explore of historic interest anyway. People come here to play, relax, eat, and drink. That doesn’t mean there aren’t some fun things to do. Whale watching in winter is a favorite of mine. I sat for hours looking at them spout as I sipped on a series of margaritas on our veranda. I’m told by anglers that nothing compares to deep sea fishing on the challenging Sea Of Cortez. And Luxury Avenue Bou-

tique Mall at the marina could surely help you part with some greenbacks.

We stayed at the Fiesta Americana Grand Los Cabos Golf and Spa Resort which has earned a place on numerous “best of” lists. Just about a half hour drive from the airport, the resort sits on a prime piece of magnificent oceanfront land on the Pacific coast.

Before going on any further, I need to share something else. The travel gods must have been aligned, as Kurt and I were surprised to be upgraded to a lovely oceanfront villa called Casa del Mar. This might be a place better suited for the likes of Jennifer Anniston or Courtney Cox—frequent visitors to Cabo—but there we were. Happily, it didn’t take us long to adapt to the surroundings and the attention provided by the friendly staff.

The private pool turned out to be the favorite highlight. We spent hours soaking in the sun and taking in the gorgeous views. By the way, it’s really worth your while to get up early to watch a Cabo sunrise. There is something pretty magical about the vast array of colors streaking across the bright blue sky.

I’ve found doing nothing can actually work up a pretty fierce appetite.



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Fortunately, we had plenty of choices just steps away. Since the resort offers an all-inclusive plan, including alcohol, the hardest decision we had to make the entire trip was where to dine. The resort has ten dining options from the most casual to fine dining. Since we experienced most of them, here are a few favorites.

La Cevicheria is a casual beach-front café serving up a vast array of fresh fish tacos and tostadas. A favorite of mine was the crispy shrimp taco, of course washed down with a couple of thirst-quenching cervezas.

Sushi Sky Bar sits on a rooftop overlooking the spectacular Pacific. As the name implies, it serves up an assortment of beautifully presented sushi from California rolls to crab and salmon. I loved the Asian/Mexican fusion of both ambiance and food.

Peninsula has Asian-inspired cuisine with the best setting of all: outdoors, just a few steps from the beach.



Highlights here included pepper beef and noodles with a soy based sauce that made me want to lick the plate.

And last but certainly not least, because we ordered this at least once a day during our visit, is the guacamole salsa and chips. Without exception, this was the best “guac” I have ever tasted. Something about just the right mix of fresh garlic, lemon, tomato, and jalapeno worked every single time.

It turns out after all of this talk of doing nothing, something actually was accomplished here in Cabo. We were able to completely unplug. Kurt and I had some of the best extended conversations we’ve had in months, including some big-time laughs. I was able to finish a novel I just never had the time to get to, and Kurt unwound the day-to-day stress of his job in the Somma Wine Spa. And we managed to time our trip on some of the coldest days of this winter. Life is good and we are grateful. Adios for now. ■



Good To Know: Delta and Sun Country offer nonstop flights from MSP that will get you to Cabo in less than 4 hours. • Move over tequila, Mexico has a growing wine industry, some are even saying Baja is the next Napa Valley. Give a try to the Grand Ricardo, a blend of Merlot and Cabernet from a Baja winery. • Fiesta American Grand Los Cabos Resort and Spa: www.fiestamericanagrand.com/en/mx-los-cabos/hotel-grand-los-cabos

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I am undocumented, my partner is a U.S. Citizen. Can we apply?
Yes.
If you were admitted into the United States, and later accrued unlawful presence, or worked unlawfully for example, your U.S. citizen spouse can petition for your green card. If you entered the States without inspection then your same-sex spouse or fiancé/e can still petition for your green card, but you will need to have an inadmissibility waiver approved before you will be eligible for your green card. You will need to consult with Attorney Kinsella in order determine if this route is the best choice for your particular situation.

- Do you need specific information about how to apply for your partner's green card?
- Did you receive a request for evidence from US Immigration?
- Did you or a loved one enter the U.S. legally and later overstay?

Attorney Kinsella is a seasoned immigration attorney who is licensed to advise on and assist with all U.S. Immigration matters nationwide. For a no nonsense, in-depth legal consultation call the Law Offices of Caro Kinsella now! Our immigration experts have processed over 100 same-sex marriage petition cases nationwide since DOMA was ruled unconstitutional last June.

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Cacti photowalk between rides and swims. Photo by Carl Hellman

Get Your Dude On!

Listen up, you urban cowboys—here's your chance to walk the talk. To discover the Inner Wrangler residing in those leather chaps, two-stepping on the dance floor. Mosey on down to Tanque Verde Ranch, outside Tucson, Arizona, for a full-on immersion in the real deal. One note of caution, however: Once here, there's no turning back. Like almost one hundred percent of its guests, you'll sign up for a repeat visit.

Staked out as a cattle ranch in the 1860s, the 640-acre property anchors a sandy bowl in the surrounding mountain ranges of Saguaro National Park, off-limits to the strip malls and neon of urban living, yet sacrificing nothing when it comes to class-act comforts (except TVs, thank goodness). Jacuzzi? Check. Spa? Check. Heated pool? Check. Sophisticated dining? Check again. Prickly pear margarita? That, too.

This is a dude ranch born of genteel Western hospitality, rather than a cutesy theme park. Clusters of casitas (69 rooms total) climb the sandy landscape, each with a fireplace and patio to monitor the fireball sunset or chill under an ink-black sky with stars as bright as searchlights. Meals are part of the all-inclusive package—including cookouts around the campfire with cowboy tunes and dancing; the legendary breakfast trail rides, where the CEO, in denim, flips blueberry pancakes on the griddle; and menu-service dinners (think churrasco flank steak, prime rib, blackened fish tacos, chimichurri game hen, grilled Caesar salad). Also included are trail rides (extra for private lessons), hikes, fishing lessons, yoga, tennis, mountain bike excursions, photo walk, even watercolor painting. Well, if you can pry yourself from the chaise longue, that is.

Rides (seven daily) range from all-day in the mountains, to team-penning cattle competitions, to two-hour ambles across the desert: sometimes just three of us with our wrangler, sometimes eight or ten. From among 180 gorgeous horses, I got assigned the foodie contingent: Nacho, Stringbean,

Shortcake, A-1 ("like the sauce," explained a handsome wrangler—the one who made my day by cooing, "Put your arm around me, honey," as incentive to dismount). Karen, a wrangler as suntanned as the desert landscape, provided easy driving instructions, "like a car: your heels are the gas pedal, your reins are the brakes." After that, pure, sweet stillness—just the soft clop of hooves in the sand as we meandered endless skeins of trails. (There are kids-only rides, too, which is fortunate, or I'd be in the embarrassing position of being outclassed by a four-year-old.)

The hikes drew (by chance) fewer takers, several times, just moi and my guide. Marcia—ladylike in her perfect manicure but a demon of desert lore—shared the skinny on the omnipresent cacti: 150-year-old saguaros pointing skyward in phallic formation as far as the eye could see; tubby barrel cacti crowned with yellow blooms ("no, they're fruit," Marcia corrects); jumping cholla, green and purple, like lengths of rope; spearlike agave; and the prickly palms of the prickly pear. Plus mesquite, creosote bushes, and mistletoe hung with ruby berries. She points out the nests carved into the saguaro by gila woodpeckers and, as a roadrunner streaks by, discusses how it nails a rattlesnake (Don't try this at home).

Another afternoon Janys helps me get up-close and personal with those cacti on a photo walk. In between times, after a lap in the pool, I'd head out solo to explore what looked from the plane like a moonscape of wall-to-wall beige. On closer inspection, myriads of subtle colors reveal themselves—pink tints, golden ones, pewter to charcoal, khaki to sage, all basking under a dome of unreal, promo-photo blue. Beats the Eskimos (and us Minnesotans) with those hundred words for snow.

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Grand Getaway



Lake Geneva Wisconsin. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com

Okay, it's been one of the hardest winters in recent history. I figured that I could stay home in my igloo—er, condo—or I could head to Wisconsin. Specifically, I went to the Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, where wintertime is a blast, but snow is only part of the fun. Factor in ski and snowboard runs, an ice-skating pavilion, cross-country trails through pine-sheltered drifts, even a sleigh ride straight out of *Dr. Zhivago*. Then, you're entitled to a round of warming, adults-only beverages in front of an over-achieving fire. (Come summer, if it ever does, add hiking, biking, and horse riding to the mix.)

The Grand Geneva earns its name when it comes to amenities, starting with a flute of Champagne at check-in. Rooms, with balcony

or patio framing a snow-frosted lake and golf course, are dressed in tobacco-toned leather and oatmeal fabric, accented by touches of warm maple. In fact, the whole lodge bears an air of Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired simplicity, from river-pebble walls to antler chandeliers.

Yet Frank would give a curmudgeonly shudder in his grave if he knew how the place got started. Back in 1968, it originated as a Playboy Club, back in the non-P.C. era when Bunnies scampered to fulfill guests' fantasies, even on the ski lifts (the term "Bunny slope" fittingly originated here). The resort re-opened in 1994 with enhanced spa facilities, redesigned golf courses, and an employee dress code that did not involve fishnets. Today it draws couples escaping from



(From left) **Sleighride, Après ski, Pastries.** Photos by Carla Waldemar

Chicago, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis for a spot of R&R.

Start with the 4,200-square-foot spa, which offers complimentary classes—think yoga, Pilates, cardio and more—as well as a full massage/beauty route, lap pool, tennis and basketball courts and rock-climbing wall. I opted for a facial treatment—like an ER for the triage victim I represented (As my attendant pointed out, “Dry skin, aging skin, and blackheads.” Thanks for sharing.) while music drifted from Beethoven lite to “Danny Boy.”

After that, I’m ready to hit the town, just minutes away. Lake Geneva, pop. 7,500, was not the tourist trap I expected, as my smokin’ credit card can attest—no dens of scented candles, no lowlife t-shirts. Instead, the classy boutiques shoppers from Chicago crave. The town arose in 1835 and took off as a resort community after the Chicago fire of 1871, when the likes of the Wrigleys and Maytags built their summer mansions on the lake. Summers, there’s a boat tour for gawkers and a 20-mile circle of hiking paths. In February, Winterfest showcases grand snow carvings.

Today, The Bootery had a sale on Uggs. Haberdapper vows to suit you gents in snappy togs. Spice Company also sells cigars. Global Hands sports bulky designer knits (yes, I caved), as does Geneva Jack’s (caved again), with its cashmere scarves. Cornerstone caught my eye with saucy Baggalino messenger bags. Grab a bite at the Creperie or breakfast bounty at Egg Harbor.

Back at the resort, sign on for a Grand Experience—events like a Wisconsin cheese and beer pairing, improve workshop, fish racing (well, you had to have been there, at the swimming pool) or the Tasty Pastry class we selected, where, under the guidance of the resort’s pastry chef and DIY assistant, Brandon, we were given a tart shell,

chocolate cup, and parfait cup to fill and decorate with everything—anything!—from pastry cream and whipped cream to chocolate syrup, along with sprinkles, candies and fresh fruit. After a crash course in plate painting (you know: all those cute hearts and curlicues), we arranged our fixings and bore them to our rooms to devour.

Speaking of eating, the options are many, starting with an elite buffet breakfast or cocktail snacks in the (upgrade option) Geneva Club, or the Grand Café, where I gorged on a Florentine Benedict, only to return to lunch on cheeseburger and crab-cake sliders (or choose Wisconsin brats and more). At the ski slope’s Timber Lodge, noshing ops included nachos, pizza, and my choices—chili and a ginormous Caesar salad, assuring a fashion faux pas involving ski pants.

Evenings, make it Italian at Brissago, where I meandered from a caprese salad to tagliatelle with lobster (or choose house-made sausage and spicy tomato sauce, etc.) to osso buco, saltimbocca, or salmon with fennel and polenta. If you desire dietary rehab, sign on for the resort’s Wellness Retreat, where, at dinner in a villa kitchen with Chef Earl conducting a demo, we dined on gazpacho topped with toasts bearing crab wrapped in a mango sliver and frosted with caviar. Then, chicken (or choose grouper) with slow-roasted strawberries and marbles of goat cheese and pistachio meringue, followed by a cool, cleansing pina colada granita as a finale.

For our final night, we settled into the luxe Geneva Chophouse, a steakhouse (fish, too) with an à la carte menu ranging from creamed spinach to lobster mac and cheese to accompany your choice beef or my rack of lamb. Dance it off in Evolve, where a live DJ spins tunes while you sip a bacon-rimmed martini. Yes, life is good. To make it yours, email info@grandgeneva.com or call 800-558-3417. ■

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SPRING & SUMMER *Style*

SHANE LUECK

IN STYLE: MEET BEN MEENTS

With a background in PR and marketing, **Benjamin Meents** has transitioned into media/analyst relations for Wolters Kluwer Financial Services. Ben and his fiancé, Chet, live in St. Louis Park with their three kids (Emma, 12, Sophia, 9, and Dominic, 5). A blended family, as the children are from previous relationships, Ben jokes that his family is like a mini-*gay Brady Bunch*. Ben is also a part of the “The Network”, a collective of young professional creative influencers who are passionate about design, fashion, and the arts, who serve as an advisory council for the Frank & Oak brand through their work on special projects and events.

Q&A

How would you describe your style?

I guess would describe my style as “modern gay dad casual”. I have a typical hectic family lifestyle and my fashion sense reflects that. I like finding inspiration in new things, and I have enough confidence to take some risks – and by risks I mean going out in public in a white v-neck undershirt sometimes. I tend to adapt my look a lot and it’s not so much to stay in tune with what is trendy as it is to adjust to changes

What are some of your favorite brands/designers?

Tom Ford. Moods of Norway. Han Kjo-benhavn. Scotch and Soda. Theory. GStar. H&M. Oh, and Hanes.

What are your go-to stores and boutiques in the Twin Cities area?

One of the great benefits of men being much more fashion-forward these days is that there are a ton of great fashion resources in the Cities now. MartinPatrick3 is a men’s fashion and lifestyle mecca and a must for any shopping trip. Nearby Arrow is great for upscale, modern stuff and I love Askov Finlayson. They have built a great unique, if offbeat, selection. All three of these have their own style and are great boutique stores that are an awesome source of inspiration depending on your individual style. Also, I love Moods of Norway at the Mall of America. Motto in



in my life. The older I get the more I realize it is important to keep it simple, stay true to what I really like and have some fun. I have never thought of myself as preoccupied with trends or labels, but I do love beautiful things that are well made. To me, fit and function are the most important things. No matter what you are wearing you have to make sure it fits well.

Who are your style icons or whose style has influenced your own?

As a kid I was in love with the New York depicted in old Woody Allen movies. Everyone was so smart and smart looking, if a bit neurotic, living in these incredible New York lofts filled with books and jazz records. No one's style was too neat or refined, everything had a great organic quality and maybe a certain level of messiness. I love the style/look of Tom Ford. David Beckham. Justin Timberlake. Johnny Depp. I follow these style blogs which are great discovery agents for those with an appreciation of quality, style and provenance: MrPorter.com, GetKempt.com, ContemporaryStandard.com, AC-continuousLean.com, and tres-bien.com.

Photography by Hubert Bonnet
Hair & Makeup by Susan Swanson, StyleBySusan
For specific outfit details, go to LavenderMagazine.com

Uptown and BlackBlue in St. Paul. Finally, I love Heime's Haberdashery, which is a Twin Cities landmark yet very relevant today. The thing I love most about each of these places is that they are all very approachable and have knowledgeable and friendly staff members who share a passion for good design and fit, so regardless of your style, you can find something that will make you look killer.

When you need "work" done, what salons do you frequent?

I am a "grow what God gave you" kinda guy but I do appreciate an eyebrow/ear waxing once in a while to keep things under control (European Wax Center is awesome) and my favorite salon is Be-spoke Artisans in Edina (Jessica Zeinstra is my go-to girl for hair).

You feel your best when wearing...?

A white Hanes V-neck t-shirt. I live in them.

Where are you most visually inspired?

The Walker Art Center, the lakes, the gateway trail, and walking around neighborhoods all over the city. I love graffiti art and love coming across new work in unexpected places.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32 ➔

BEN MEENTS



SPRING & SUMMER *Style*

You always make time for...?
Ice cream.

Never leave the house without?
Face cream and lip balm.

Never caught wearing...?
Boxer shorts.

Your number one fashion rule?
Make sure the fit is right. Develop an intimate relationship with a good tailor. Otherwise, I

am a pretty down-to-earth guy, and, more than anything, I just try to be true to myself and what I like. I like to be a little playful and have fun. Life is too short to always play by the rules.

How do you approach getting dressed?
I try to anticipate how sweaty I am going to get throughout the day and pick my clothes accordingly.

How has your style evolved the most?
I have become more comfortable stepping out of my comfort zone and not always playing it

safe. I would say I have become more relaxed in general. Life is hectic for everyone these days, so with the chaos that goes along with having kids and pets and all the other things making us all busy in today's world, you have to adjust your style so it works for you.

What is your one fashion splurge or most expensive thing in your closet?
My kids are the most expensive thing, we always splurge on them and they are probably messing around with clothes in my closet right now. ■



Palm Sunday: April 13, 10:30 am
Maundy Thursday Service: April 17, 7:00 pm - Soup Supper at 6 pm
Stations of the Cross Experience: April 18 from 10 am - 3 pm
Good Friday Tenebrae Service: April 18, 7 pm - Soup Supper at 6 pm

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Service of Tenebrae

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SPRING & SUMMER *Style*

IN STYLE: MEET MAYDA

SHANE LUECK

Mayda Miller, born in Incheon City, South Korea, and adopted at just under one year of age, has been bobbing her head and swaying to music since she was able to stand in her crib. Without anyone else in the family musically oriented, this young Korean American pop artist has made a name for herself. Hailing from Minneapolis, Mayda's music has been featured locally as well as nationally (*The Rachael Ray Show*, *The Jersey Shore*, *The Real L Word*, *Weeds*, *Good Morning America*, and the list goes on). Mayda's new album, *Busy Signals*, drops in May.



Q&A

How would you describe your style?

I would have to say that I am pretty simple (a little rough around the edges) with splashes of different flavors in the sense of art, fashion, and lifestyle. I like to be able to be mobile and ready for change in any situation. Concepts with accessories are most important for me in terms of fashion.

Who are your style icons or whose style has influenced your own?

I really like David Bowie and Sly & the Family Stone. I am also a huge fan of the '20s and '30s era, so Josephine Baker with a tint of punk, if that makes sense.

What are some of your favorite brands/designers?

I usually go the thrift store or local designer route because I am such a unique size to fit. With that said, I sometimes do not know what or who I am wearing. I always like to see what's going on with what current up-and-coming designers are doing, though.

What are your go-to stores and boutiques in the Twin Cities area?

Unique Thrift Store, the Mall of America, and local designer friends who help me find and fit outfits. I have no sense of what works with me!

When you need "work" done, what salons do you frequent?

Sometimes I go to Evolution on Lyndale or just call friends who work on-site. I rarely go to spas or places like that because I am broke. Just don't look at my hands and feet. Not pretty.

You feel your best when wearing...?

Something that is not itchy, backwards, or makes me look smaller.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36 ➔

MAYDA

Photography by Hubert Bonnet
Hair & Makeup by Allison Jean AuBuchon,
www.allisonjeanaubuchon.com

SPRING & SUMMER *Style*

Where are you most visually inspired?

At live performances/shows.

You always make time for...?

Creativity and comedy.

You never leave the house without...?

As nerdy as it sounds, my glasses. Everyone on this earth would be in trouble if I did.

Never caught wearing...?

Leotards, no way.

Your number one fashion/style rule?

Be confident.

How do you approach getting dressed?

What is the temperature outside? What event(s) am I going to today?

How has your style evolved the most?

From what I thought was cool to what I feel is cool.

What is your one fashion splurge or most expensive thing in your closet?

My tailored vintage outfits from local designer friends. ■



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SPRING & SUMMER *Style*

IN STYLE: MEET RICHARD MOODY

The creative visionary behind **IamMoody**, an event and promotions company specializing in fashion, **Richard Moody** has a passion for fashion that knows no limits. Not only is Richard an expert on fashion, but he is a socialite as well. Always the first to tell others about new opportunities, he is known for sharing valuable knowledge within the industry and earning a reputation as a successful philanthropist in the Twin Cities. Richard is also the creator of the Dandies Project, “a movement consisting of men of color dedicated to mentoring young men of color with a positive influence, starting with a strong sense of individuality through self-awareness and style.”

SHANE LUECK



Q&A

How would you describe your style?

My style is Cowboy Chic with a classic vintage twist and self-confidence.

Who are your style icons or whose style has influenced your own?

My style icons are Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, Steve McQueen, Paul Smith, and Thom Browne.

My style can also be influenced from traveling abroad for most of my life.

What are some of your favorite brands/designers?

The Bow Tie Shoppe, LongChamp, Waterman, Mont Blanc, Pendleton, Woolrich, Filson, Hudson Bay, Etro, Theory, Paul Smith, Zara Man, Marked Inc., JW Hulme Co., See Eyewear, EyeBobs, and OGI.



Photography by Hubert Bonnet
Hair & Makeup by Susan Swanson, StyleBySusan

What are your go-to-stores and boutiques in the Twin Cities area?
Second Debut, Arrow, MartinPatrick3, Motto, D.Nolo, Handsome Cycles, BlackBlue.

When you need "work" done, what salons do you frequent?

Hair: Casablanca's on 25th and Hennepin, Nails: Always Nails.

You feel your best when wearing?

Black and my vintage cowboy boots from an Amsterdam flea market.

Where are you most visually inspired?

Paris, France; Cape town, South Africa; Amsterdam; Jamaica; London; flea markets around the world and vintage stores.

You always make time for...?

Young people and nonprofits that support education, homelessness, youth, AIDS, and the arts made in Minnesota.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40 ➔

SPRING & SUMMER *Style*

You never leave the house without...?

Cell phone, iPad, toothbrush, toothpaste, business cards, credit card, scarf, watch, manbag (murse), sunglasses, camera, reading glasses, a positive attitude, and smile.

Never caught wearing...?

Tennis shoes and workout gear (when not at the gym).

Your number one fashion/style rule?

Create your own style, stay true to yourself and your body type.

How do you approach getting dressed?

To always be ready for the camera, getting dressed is like a sporting event. To always be the best and look my best.

How has your style evolved the most?

It's become less complicated, more focused on quality verses quantity.

What is your one fashion splurge or most expensive thing in your closet?

My J.W. Hume Co. classic tote with Woolrich (Made in America) OR my Woolrich limited plaid print edition peacoat, bucket hat, and shoulder bag from Arrow Minneapolis. ■



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SPRING & SUMMER *Style*

SHANE LUECK



Chelsea Goodale stands in front of two of her favorite pieces: a 1940s dress and a vintage Wrangler jean jacket. (At right) The aesthetic of Shag's hair salon matches the feel of the vintage clothing boutique. Photos by Hubert Bonnet





SHAG STUDIO

SERVING UP VINTAGE STYLE

"I can't say that my initial intentions were to have a one-stop shop," Chelsea Goodale says of her vintage emporium, Shag Studio. "More so, clothing and hair are two passions of mine that made sense together. And for some people, it is a one-stop shop."

Shag offers not only clothing and accessories, but also houses a hair salon outfitted with retro equipment. Goodale says, "Most of my hair clients do end up leaving with a new piece to add to their wardrobe. And many others just come for the clothing and boutique side of Shag."

Goodale guesses that Shag is probably one of the only blended salon/boutique locations in the Twin Cities, offering a head-to-toe experience for customers. And the reasons customers come to Shag vary. "Vintage has become timeless," Goodale says. "We have anything from classic pieces that never go out of style, to theatrical pieces that could be used for the stage or a themed party."

The blended boutique/salon business is certainly more than meets the eye, as Shag is also home to a Wig Master. "My staff and I are very knowledgeable of wigs," Goodale adds. "We often do custom cutting, coloring, and shampoo/styling on wigs. Most often we have a consultation with the wig owner, and they leave their wig with us for a few days to complete their wig service." In addition to styling already owned pieces, Goodale mentions that Shag is also a good outsource for having custom pieces made.

For clients styling hair of their own, Goodale has noticed two trends for spring and summer. With two different extremes, either a short pixie cut or hair extensions to add length and fullness, Goodale and her staff consult with clients to find the best extension installation for their hair type and lifestyle.

As for clothing trends, it seems the skinny jean is here to stay. "The skinny jean isn't realistic for everyone," Goodale declares. "I encourage people who don't feel comfortable in the skinny jean to try a more fitted

jean. Wearing clothing that is more tailored to their bodies can make a huge difference. I always encourage people to stay true to themselves and their personal style."

With vintage trends on the rise and shops popping up on every street corner, customers have to be sure they are actually getting the good deal they believe they are. With Shag, customers can be assured the quality of the vintage clothing is top notch as the staff will be sure items are in peak condition before placing them on the sales floor.

But Goodale recognizes that not every vintage shop will offer this quality and suggests some tips for shopping vintage items. When buying vintage shoes, it's always a good idea to give the sole of the shoe a gentle bend. The point is to be sure the sole doesn't have cracks, and that the sole of the shoe is intact.

With clothing, give the material a gentle tug: make sure the material is sturdy and isn't dry rotting. Dry rot is a breakdown of the fabric or material; it is a result of poor temperature and moisture control during storage. When buying vintage coats, always check the lining to be sure it's intact. Check the under arms and pockets for holes and tears.

"When buying vintage at Shag, you don't need to worry about checking for flaws," Goodale says. "We wash, steam, and mend all articles of clothing before they are ready to go onto the floor."

There's certainly something refreshing about visiting a place where the quality is high and the prices competitive. It is this attention to detail and quality that has grown Shag's clientele. "There is such a wide variety of people who shop at Shag," Goodale says. "They won't have to worry about running into someone on the street with the same outfit. There really isn't a defined type of person who is comfortable shopping at Shag. It really comes down to the type of person who is looking for a one of a kind piece." ■

(From left) Shag's product offerings range from clothes and shoes to accessories and luggage. Some of Shag's clothing, such as this red dress, are reconfigured by Shag's seamstress and sold as entirely new and different pieces. The waiting area of the hair salon showcases Shag's wig work.



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OUR SCENE

ARTS & CULTURE | ON THE RECORD | BY ED HUYCK



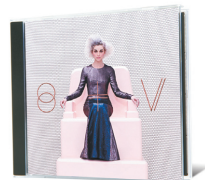
PHANTOGRAM *Voices*

This New York duo rode a wave of modern, moody electronic music at the end of the last decade and like some of their colleagues – the XX come to mind – they have evolved into a stronger act on their second full-length album. There are two factors pushing that evolution. The first is the deepened work done by Josh Carter and Sarah Barthel, who share the vocals. The other is strong interplay between guitars (Carter) and keyboards (Barthel), which gives the band a lot more aural life than plenty of other electronic bands. You also can't discount the strong set of songs – like the fierce “The Day You Died” or moody “I Don't Blame You” – for the strength of the album.



BROKEN BELLS *After the Disco*

The second album formed by the unlikely alliance between Danger Mouse and The Shins' James Mercer sounds fine in isolation, but it pales once you listen to it back to back with the band's self-titled debut. The intriguing rough edges that fueled much of the music on the first album have been smoothed away, leaving a well-produced but absolutely typical piece of 2014-style rock. The songs are slick and well put together, which has led to songs like the title track getting plenty of traction on stations like The Current. However, there's a sameness to the tunes that makes it tougher and tougher to really fall in love with the recording. It's fine for a quick trip, but I wouldn't want to spend hours with this on repeat.



ST. VINCENT *St. Vincent*

For her latest album, St. Vincent (stage name of Annie Erin Clark) seems to be channeling a bit of early 1990s Liz Phair. The songs on this self-titled album burst with an off-center energy not present on her last album, the more introspective *Strange Mercy*. Employing a heavier vibe than in the past, Clark runs us through her recent years. They've been tremendous for her artistically – solo success and collaboration with the legendary David Byrne – and you can feel and hear that throughout this tight 11-song collection. The bracing music ties in with Clark's growing confidence as a songwriter. The songs are still personal, but are now touching on a broader swath of topics that makes for a thrilling listen.



RACHEL KILGOUR *Whistleblower's Manifesto: Songs for a New Revolution*

Duluth has long been an interesting musical breeding ground, isolated enough to ferment a unique music scene with numerous acts finding a footing by Lake Superior. Rachel Kilgour's new three-song EP showcases a distinct, folk-tinged sound that features lyrics that reflect back on another Iron Range denizen: Bob Dylan. This is 21st century folk rock, with angry songs about religious intolerance (“He'll Save Me”) and modern American economics (“In America”). Kilgour sings with plenty of clarity and verve, and the songs are driven forward by plenty of acoustic-guitar fueled intensity, but the protest songs are a little too on point for me. I agree with everything she has to say here, but I wish there were a bit more grace in the message. ■

Bearracuda Returns to EagleBOLTbar

Gay bears in the Twin Cities are coming out of winter hibernation—and not just because of the spring weather! On April 19, they're heading to the EagleBOLTbar in Downtown Minneapolis for the return of the wildly popular Bearracuda, with DJ Matt Consola from San Francisco spinning. Join hundreds of furry, friendly guys for this great night. Get there early, as the cover is \$5 before 10 PM and \$7 after.

Started in 2006 in San Francisco, Bearracuda is the largest attended bear dance party and most prolific gay dance event in the United States. Such events take place in 38 cities across the world, including parties in San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, New York City, Austin, Atlanta, London, and Sydney. Upcoming parties include Portland Pride, June 13; Gay Pride San Francisco, June 27; Vancouver Pride, August 3; Folsom Street Friday, San Francisco, September 19; San Francisco Bear Pride, November 8; and Bearracuda Heretic Cruise 2015.

Consola is widely known as a circuit DJ, as well as a record label owner (Redzone Records). He is resident DJ at Sanctuary, Adonis, and Boy Bar in San Francisco.

The EagleBOLTbar is headquarters for the local bear community. It hosts Bear Night every fourth Saturday, which includes a beer bust 8-11 PM.

For more information, visit www.bearracuda.com. ■

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Photo courtesy of Bearracuda

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A Full Rack

Midway Pro Bowl owner Scott Koecheler lets out a hearty laugh and recalls one of his earliest experiences hosting a tournament for the GLBT community.

"During the first or second Paul Bunyan Invitational Tournament, two teams from Chicago used one of our changing rooms. When they emerged they were dressed as early Romans, you know, togas, the whole bit. As they moved towards their lanes they were throwing pink feathers in the air! It was quite a sight!"

Scott is animated and friendly – he clearly enjoys telling this story and loves his customers.

"Twenty years later, we're making changes to our lanes and we discovered PINK FEATHERS under the lanes!! Gave us a great laugh and brought back excellent memories!"

Committed to tracking down every gay sports league in the great Minneapolis-St. Paul area, I'm happily enjoying a beer and a great burger at Midway on a Sunday afternoon, lured in by the idea of "Bowling for Boobies" (in support of Bowl for the Cure – a noble breast cancer awareness initiative). Midway Pro Bowl is tucked into a strip mall off University in St. Paul, a quaint and lively location that is now home to three of the four (to date) Twin Cities gay bowling leagues.

Steve Nardini, one of the Bowling for Boobies organizers and MC's, points me in the direction of long-time league member Laura

Schnellman to get a rundown of the various leagues. If you're interested in joining one, they include:

The Hump Day Bowlers League (Wednesdays at Midway Pro Bowl)

A 22-team, very social, close-knit group with a low turnover rate due to the level of camaraderie. They have potlucks, good communication from league officers via Facebook and email, and a lot of fun. They hold a number of league fundraising events throughout the season, with a percentage of the monies donated to local and national charities. Skill levels range from very good to bowling newbies. They celebrate each year with a banquet at the end of the season.

The Twin Cities Friday League (Fridays at Midway Pro Bowl)

A 10-team league, also with skill levels ranging from very good to newbies. The smaller size allows for easy socializing and friendly competition, since everyone sort of knows everyone else. It's either a great way to end the week or start the weekend. There is a core group of bowlers that have been in the league for many years, and they are always looking for new bowlers for the next season to help the league grow.

The Funday Monday League (Mondays at Midway Pro Bowl)

A newer, 6-team league which began in January of 2014, with 20-25 bowlers who play on three-person teams.

The Wednesday Rainbow League (Wednesdays at Memory Lanes)

A 30-team league, with four to six person teams, comprised of GLBT and straight allies ranging in ages from the 20s to the 60s who bowl from September to April. They are celebrating 35 seasons of bowling fun and community interaction in the 2014-2015 season, and many members have been involved for decades. Each season is wrapped up with a great end-of-season banquet where prizes are awarded. Their waiting list is open for anyone to join in the 2014-2015 season.


All four leagues identify as GLBT, though they are open to anyone. League preference has more to do with time and location than the competition level, or type of person who frequents any particular league.

I asked Scott Koecheler how three of the four GLBT leagues came to call Midway Pro Bowl their home.

"It started when we purchased Midway Pro Bowl in 1982 – we were told that we would be hosting a "gay" tournament, and I didn't have any experience with the community. So, we met with the tournament organizers and thus began our *fantastic* relationship with the GLBT community! It is our philosophy to make *everyone* feel safe so they can have a great time. We try to maintain good contact and be as friendly and welcoming as possible!"

Laura, who's been a bowler and team cap-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64 ➔



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Fitness



PUSH YOUR LIMITS WITH AX FITNESS

Photo by Jackie Lehmann

Most people who work out have some insecurity they face every time they set foot in a gym. Some people are self-conscious about their weight or the type of exercise they're capable of performing. Some people can't find the motivation or the time to get to the gym. Others are worried about whether the muscle-man next to them is going to be too territorial with the weight equipment, making it impossible to complete a workout without fear of a confrontation. For others in our GLBT community, the thought of being vulnerable in a gym is too discomforting for a gym membership to be beneficial. Whatever that hurdle is, there's a new fitness studio that makes the comfort, safety, and morale of its clients a priority—AX Fitness in Northeast Minneapolis.

A simple glance at the studio proves that this is not your average gym. Instead of a

bunch of complicated machines, there are some punching bags and tractor tires. Chalkboards with personal goals and accomplishments cover the walls. And owner Christine Jaques's belief that "fitness is personal" is felt the moment you're welcomed at the door. With its unconventional space and personal touches, the AX Fitness studio is the gym for fitness junkies as well as people who hate going to conventional gyms.

As a long-time athlete, Christine Jaques has always been an avid fitness guru. (Name any sport, and you can bet she's either played it, coached it, or managed it!) But it wasn't until later in her life that she discovered her potential to put her passion to work by helping others reach their goals through personal fitness training. Proudly dubbed "The Organic Gym" due to its intentional differences (such as fundamental training

methods and a lack of traditional exercise machines) that set it apart from corporate gyms, AX Fitness is the preferred fitness program for numerous clients, including many of the Minnesota RollerGirls. With her new studio in Northeast Minneapolis, Christine Jaques uses AX Fitness to inspire her clients to improve their health and well-being in an open and inclusive environment.

After working several jobs in various fitness and recreational fields, Christine had had enough. She recalls, "I was sick of working temporary or seasonal recreation jobs. I said, 'I'm going to be in control of my own destiny.'" Christine enrolled in a personal training program at MCTC and got certified in 2012. As part of her education, she held an internship at Acceleration Minnesota in Arden Hills, which focuses on sports training. She notes, "I went there on

purpose because I wanted to go somewhere that was much more athletically inclined than a regular gym." During her initial meeting, Christine inquired about Acceleration's cardio kickboxing program, only to learn that the program wasn't offered anymore. She took that opportunity to recreate a new version of cardio kickboxing including some additional elements to the workout. A new program was developed from the cardio kickboxing class—what is now called AX Fitness. Christine then found herself with quite a bit more responsibility than most interns; she was trusted to run the AX Fitness program out of the Acceleration location.

As AX Fitness became more popular, Christine began to dream of her own studio. The only problem came with the cash—any business owner knows that startup money isn't easy to come by. But Christine

was able to lean on her AX Fitness community to help her dream come true. Many clients who believed in her program offered to donate or loan money to allow Christine to move into her own studio in Northeast Minneapolis. Christine recalls the generosity of one particular lender. One man was dragged to AX Fitness by his wife because she was sick of him using his back pain as an excuse to not work out. Christine discussed his limitations and created a fitness program to help him safely strengthen his back. Less than a year after he began his training, he finished his first marathon. Christine improved his quality of life so much that he became a lender for her new space. Like this man, most of Christine's clients have had such positive experiences that they are willing to support the future of AX Fitness.

The AX Fitness workout proves that you don't need a lot of fancy equipment in order to get a good workout. Using mostly bodyweight exercises, core exercises, and some additional props (including medicine balls, hand weights, and tires of various weights), Christine creates workouts that are beneficial to both athletes and average people who want to make significant improvements in their fitness. She notes, "The workout encompasses every part of your body...even muscles that you don't even think you have! We try to engage all those small muscle groups that people forget to work out because those groups help your larger muscle groups work harder. We always keep the cardio capacity up because it increases muscular endurance. If you're an athlete, I want you at 100% your entire shift, and I want you at 100% as many times as possible throughout that game. The only way to do that is to train your body as a whole. My workout improves cardio capacity, muscular strength, and endurance, power, and speed." The AX Fitness class allows participants of all levels to work at their own intensity and speed, ensuring that they feel challenged to push their limits in a safe, controlled



Christine Jaques. Photo by Mike Hnida

environment.

The 55-minute AX Fitness sessions are geared toward intermediate exercisers, so Christine suggests that beginners start with the Cardio Kickboxing class. In addition to kickboxing drills, this 45-minute course focuses on strengthening the core muscles in the body. For those who need an extreme challenge, such as many of the Minnesota RollerGirls and other top-tier athletes, Christine offers a MAX Fitness class, which is "essentially the AX class on steroids! It's faster, harder, heavier weights. It's super competitive, and I have to work to push those people." Finally, if you're a little leery about working out with others (or if you just want her undivided attention), Christine is more than happy to set up personal training sessions. With all the options, clients are guaranteed to get the most out of their time and money. Christine says, "My entire idea about fitness is that we live in a very fast-paced world, and people don't have time to work out. If you don't know what you're doing when you go to the gym, you're kind of wasting your time. The idea behind the way that I train is that you can get a full-body workout when you come in for 55 minutes. You're going to hit it hard!"

The two aspects of AX Fitness that set it apart from other training methods are its sustainability, and the sense of community Christine has developed in her studio. She states, "I want it to be functional and sustainable. That should be the first question anyone asks when they start a fitness program. Can I see myself doing this six months from now? Two years from now? Some other programs are developed, and they can have injury records that follow them. People don't get hurt in my class. They get stronger. They get faster. They get in the best shape of their lives." Though a bit of competition naturally occurs in the classes, Christine believes the classes are more about supporting each other. This support is ideal to any fitness plan. She adds, "It's a community-based gym. You're going to find support. It's going to feel like a family. You feel like somebody when you walk in the door. I always say that fitness is personal, and I take that very seriously. I want people to understand that they are cared for, and that their fitness needs are going to be addressed."

Christine's success is seen through the retention and improvement of her clients. She gets to know each person who trains at AX and is therefore

able to continually provide ways to improve their workout experiences. She says, "I've had most of my clients for one or two years, and I know their strengths and weaknesses. If you train with me, you'll end up in my chair talking to me about your struggles or challenges."

Though Christine's journey to opening her dream fitness studio has been anything but easy, she is continually inspired by the community she has nurtured within the fitness world. Christine understands firsthand what it's like to feel intimidated and lost—she struggled to come out as a lesbian on a college athletic team that was less than accepting. She recalls that experience as her motivation for creating a safe gym. She adds, "I want my gym to be a place where anyone can come in and be supported and understood. If you hate going to a big corporate gym, I want you to be able to come into mine and not feel like that. Whatever your issue is. Everyone has hang-ups. You shouldn't feel intimidated. That inspires me. Watching my clients, who have now become my friends, watching them grow...I know I'm doing something right."

For more detailed pricing, class schedules, and more information can be found at www.axfitness.com. ■

Fitness

10 TIPS

FOR BEING A “10” BY SUMMER

Finally!

Summer is just around the corner and soon everybody will be showing some skin! Here are ten simple things you can start doing today to be ready for a day at the beach!

Partner Workouts

Working out with your partner can be one of the most fun and valuable activity times that you spend together. I suggest meeting with a trainer in order to get the proper and appropriate knowledge and have him or her show each of you how to effectively train each other. A small investment up front will save tons of money and will make for safe, fun, and effective workouts for just the two of you.

Be Consistent

People think that top fitness models go all out on every workout, but in reality it's not so much about the effort as it is about the consistency. A little bit every day is much better and safer than totally killing yourself once a week and being so tired that you have no motivation to get back into the gym for another workout.

What Are You Putting in Your Mouth?

When it comes to dieting I don't advocate anything extreme. Just keep it simple and

be smart about it. Think about everything that you are putting into your body and ask yourself, "Is this conducive to my goals?" You would be surprised at what people eat when they are not thinking.

Get Stronger!

Just doing the same weights and reps all the time will never force your body to adapt. You need to add that extra weight and do those extra reps to get the fastest results. This is a huge benefit that my clients experience because I push them to the limit every workout. If they did 150 pounds 10 times last week I'm going to get them to do 160 11 times this week! It is fun and exciting to do more than you have ever done before and the results will quickly show because of it. So when you think you can only do 10 find a way deep down inside to do 15!

Try Tabata

Tabata is a unique and extremely effective type of cardio consisting of predetermined work and rest periods. Very simple and will get you sweating instantly. The typical setup is 20 seconds of work and 10 seconds of rest. Repeat these cycles for anywhere from 10 cycles to 100 cycles. You can use any form of activity: running, jumping rope, lunges, or crunches, for example.

Get Aggressive

Tires, sledgehammers, battle ropes, boxing, and kickboxing. These are extremely high-intensity exercise selections that not only burn tons of calories but also make you stronger while you're doing them (and are a great way to relieve some stress). A lot of my clients say they are always visualizing someone who really ticked them off while they are smashing tires with a sledgehammer!

Set a Date

Need a little extra motivation? Pick a specific date this summer that you want to look your best for. I have a client going to Miami in July and his goal is to be as big and ripped as possible for that weekend. I have another woman that is getting ready for her wedding and wants the best-looking arms she's had in her life. By picking a date you will automatically take it to the next level in all aspects of your fitness goals.

Personal Training: No Longer Just a Luxury

Just a few years ago only the rich had trainers and it was viewed as a total luxury. That is definitely no longer the case. I see all types of clients and we always find solutions no matter what the budget. At a bare minimum, everyone should be seeing fitness professionals at the front end of a training

program and checking in with them at least once every four to eight weeks. This will ensure the movements are being done as effectively as possible and that each workout is as safe and accurate as possible for each person's individual goals and limitations.

Schedule it as a Top Priority

One of the most valuable aspects of having a personal trainer is that you have it scheduled and you stick to that appointment. Whether you have a trainer or not you still need to be scheduling your workouts ahead of time and sticking to those workouts. Schedules fill up quickly and only the priorities will stick so give yourself what you deserve and schedule those workouts and stick to them!

Most Importantly, Have Fun!

If your workouts are not inspiring, challenging, or at least semi-creative, they are not going to be fun. And if they're not fun, you're not gonna keep showing up! I make sure that all my clients are having a good time while they are sweating. If the workout is fun time will fly by, if the workout is dull and boring time seems to drag on forever! Simple stuff like new exercises or even just great music can really set the tone for a great time at the gym. ■



Benjamin Loehrer is the owner of (and trainer at) Los Campeones Gym in the Seward neighborhood of Minneapolis. Overall membership has doubled since Mr. Loehrer bought the gym in 2010, with gay membership up a little over 100% and female usage up 400%. In addition, the gym now offers the expertise of 20+ trainers. Los Campeones has been specifically catering to a growing gay and lesbian clientele who appreciate his ability to get them to the next level. For more information, go to www.loscampeonesgym.com.

Leather Lens: Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2014



1. Greg Menzel, Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2014, moments after being awarded the title. 2. The contestants in the Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2014 contest. Left to right: Tim Holden, Greg Menzel (Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2014), and Boy Cody. 3. Boy Cody (kneeling) performing great moments from his favorite movies during the Talent portion of the contest. 4. Greg Menzel demonstrates his bartending skills during the Talent portion of the contest. 5. The evening's emcee, Karri Plowman (left), assisted by Luke Wallrich. 6. The moment of truth: Kyle Truss puts the Mr. Twin Cities Leather sash on Greg Menzel while Boy Cody reacts. 7. Greg Menzel, Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2014 (second from left), with the three owners of Twin Cities Leather & Latte: from left, Luke Wallrich, Tynan Fox, and Karri Plowman. Photos by Steve Lenius

This year's Mr. Twin Cities Leather Contest weekend, held Friday, Feb. 14, through Sunday, Feb. 16, was packed with something for everyone. The weekend started Friday with a Meet-and-Greet-the-Contestants evening and a Red & Black Ball in honor of Valentine's Day. On Saturday afternoon, Kink U presented several classes, and Sunday's Victory Brunch was followed by more Kink U classes, an afternoon beer bust, and a rubber/kink shower contest in the evening. All of the weekend's public events were hosted by The Saloon.

Saturday evening's contest was the high point of the weekend, and it was full of surprises. One of the evening's entertainers did a wicked Michele Bachmann drag impersonation. The outgoing Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2013 titleholder, Kyle Truss, did a step-aside

striptease in which he literally stripped off the accoutrements of his title year. And The Atons of Minneapolis did an official presentation of their club colors to Twin Cities Leather & Latte.

The evening's three contestants (Tim Holden, Boy Cody, and Greg Menzel) each gave entertaining performances during the talent portion of the contest. Holden wore what looked like a medieval robe as he performed a takedown on Tim Hotchkin; Boy Cody performed some of his favorite moments from classic movies; and Menzel, a bartender at The Saloon, demonstrated his drink-mixing talents. When the judges' scores were totaled, Menzel was awarded the Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2014 title and sash.

Contest emcee was Karri Plowman, as-

sisted by Luke Wallrich, both of Twin Cities Leather & Latte. Judges were Tynan Fox, an educator, speaker, and blogger; Tim Balfanz, general manager of The Saloon; Sir Jack Duke, International Leather Sir 2012 from Dallas; Rod McCoy, aka "Onyx Rod," Leatherman of Color 2011 from Washington, D.C.; Andrew Bertke, President of the Atons of Minneapolis; and Daniel Hennagir, Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2011. Tallymaster duties were handled by Michael Kramer. Entertainment was provided by Lucy Furr and Nocturna Lee Mission.

As Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2014, Menzel will represent Twin Cities Leather & Latte and Minnesota's leather community in the 36th annual International Mr. Leather competition (www.imrl.com), May 23-26, 2014 (Memorial Day weekend) in Chicago. ■



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On Loving Women

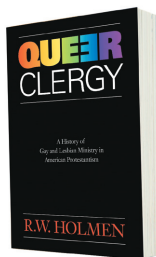
Diane Obomsawin
Translated by Helge Dascher
Drawn & Quarterly
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Obomsawin's stark line art, her animal and bird characters, skim the deceptive surface of deep, emotional waters. The ten short stories each profile a different young person and convey with affection and humor her experience of coming out, exploring her first realization of her sexual identity through love gained or—inevitably—lost. The author/artist's simple, fluid lines convey an astonishing range of emotion; the rise of an eyebrow or curve of a tiny breast are gems of narrative compression. "Charlotte's Story" opens in a little convent school in the Canadian plains where eighth grader Charlotte falls in love with a ninth grader. They separate for the summer; they write; they visit; they make love. A charming, pastoral tale. Obomsawin lives in Montréal and writes in French.

Queer Clergy: A History of Gay and Lesbian Ministry in American Protestantism

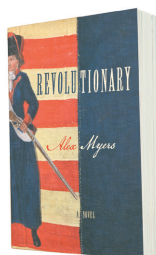
R.W. Holmen
The Pilgrim Press
\$27



Holmen tells the sweeping history of gay and lesbian clergy in the mainstream Protestant churches through the five denominations of American ecumenical Protestantism (United Church of Christ, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Methodist), through the metaphor of journey, mapping the roads travelled with interviews of member clergy. This technique gives a depth and breadth to the struggles of gays and lesbians of faith. Moving from the 1950s concept of gayness as "sin, sickness, and criminality," through the intervening decades and changing attitudes, these pages, through the voices of the clergy themselves, set forth the changes and progress that has been completed—and how much further we have yet to go. Holmen will launch *Queer Clergy* at Uptown's Magers and Quinn Booksellers on April 8 at 7PM.

Revolutionary

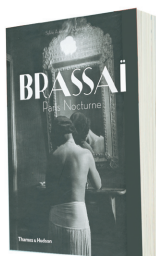
Alex Myers
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Confined by the eighteenth century strictures on women, Deborah Samson, a weaver in a small Massachusetts village, strikes out on her own and in a daring move enlists as Robert Shurtliff in the Continental Army. This is a gritty, thoroughly captivating adventure that has the advantage of being true. Deborah did bivouac at West Point, survive the winter's rigors, shoot, and get shot. Myers thoroughly researched the character—he is a descendant—and American army life of 1782. Myers also has the advantage of gender perspective, being the first trans graduate of Philips Exeter Academy and the first openly transgender Harvard student. Deborah went on to marry and have children but her bravery, gender questioning, and her yearning for love and freedom strike a chord today.

Brassaï: Paris Nocturne

Sylvie Aubenas and Quentin Bajac
Thames & Hudson
\$85



This lush volume (308 pages, 296 illustrations) brings together the best of Brassaï's images from the classic collections, *Paris After Dark* and *The Secret Paris of the 1930s*, along with unpublished photographs and archival material. Born Gyula Halász in Brasow, Hungary, in 1899 (d. 1984), Brassaï came to Paris in 1924, working as a journalist before delving into Paris's night secrets. Henry Miller, in an essay on the photographer, called him "the Eye of Paris," while Brassaï himself said, "I became a photographer so that I could capture Paris by night." Essays by Aubenas and Bajac, noted print and photographic curators—the former at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the latter at the Museum of Modern art—put Brassaï's enormous body of work in perspective. ■

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Acura MDX



When the world throws a lot of stress in your face, you simply need some luxury in your life.

This is life. A job that pays fine, but not without a few contingencies to make things interesting. There are weather patterns that frustrate you, people who irritate you, despite their friendship or connection and so forth.

But, life should not have to hold us down. It should be celebrated. When you celebrate life, the joy of everything around you be-

comes clearer. Thus, you need a little luxury to uplift you.

What kind of luxury do you want? Maybe it is a pair of jeans from a designer. An upgraded seat on a plane or at a sporting event would do. Perhaps driving something that is indeed luxurious – preferably from a premium brand.

In this case, Acura provided the luxury with its redone version of its three-row crossover, the MDX.

What the MDX represents is attainable

luxury. Acura always had a sporty side, but the brand delivers on its promise of luxury with swaths of leather and appropriate upgrades that drew customers away from the standard bearers back in 1986. In this top-shelf Advance package with additional equipment comprising the Entertainment package, you might say that the standard bearers may have been put on notice again.

It starts off with the changes outside. One may think that Acura had supersized the

nimble brand-leading RDX crossover; there are plenty of cues from that and the flagship RLX sedan on the new MDX. The Jewel-Eye headlights not only give some fabulousness to the front end, they emit some of the best lighting in its class.

The overall shape is uncomplicated and familiar. The shield grille gets some serious updating, while the side greenhouse follows brand convention with its rear quarter triangular glass. The doors are large, though the rears could open a bit wider to accommodate the third row. Finishing the look is a set of nineteen-inch alloys shod with Michelin Latitude tires.

The luxury really comes into play once you open up the doors to the MDX. The hides used for their top trim are both soft and comfortable. They are draped over some of the best two rows of seats ever experienced in its class. Front seats are huge and supportive. They provide a throne-like experience to survey the road ahead. Rear seats are thick and comfortable – the best amongst second-row seating in its class. There is more than enough room for adults of all sizes behind the driver, which is also achieved with adjustments for legroom at the cushion. There is a third row, but it is only recommended for children.

Most premium brands go over the top with instrumentation, controls, and décor. The MDX takes a straightforward approach to its cabin design. Two big dials for the tachometer and speedometer are flanked by the fuel and temp gauges, meeting in the middle for a switchable screen featuring the trip, vehicle, and fuel consumption readouts. Switches are comprehensive, easy to operate, and good to the touch. The center stack shows Acura/Honda's two-screen set up with a static screen up top and a touch version below. They may seem intimidating and redundant at first, but once you set these screens up accordingly, they work perfectly for the necessary infotainment options you need.

For the audiophile, Acura's ELS Studio system offers 12 speakers of fine sound. There are plenty of choices for audio from

iPod/iPhone integration, Bluetooth connectivity for phone and music, and application sync-ups with Aha. The latter is courtesy of Acura Link, an expanded suite of infotainment and telematic connectivity. The Entertainment package adds a wide video screen for rear seat passengers, including head-phones to keep them occupied.

The corporate 3.5-liter V6 is shrouded under the hood by Acura's cladding to reduce noise and vibration. It is a well-behaved motor spewing 295 horsepower and 267 pound-feet of torque designed to motivate 4,332 pounds of three-row crossover. Through a six-speed automatic transmission, the V6 responds extremely well to the throttle and matches revs with gears all the way to cruising at around 1500RPM at highway speed. This driveline is also poised when dealing with less than ideal traffic patterns – including icy roads where traffic becomes very cautious on these surfaces.

Considering the extreme conditions the MDX had to endure, one feature stood out above everything else. This model has perhaps one of the best all-wheel drive systems amongst premium automotive brands – SH-AWD. Translated as “Super Handling All Wheel Drive,” the term is properly apt. The system provides grip to slipping wheels by ensuring that the power goes right directly them in a well-balanced manner.

It is one thing to explain how it works; it is another to actually feel it work. A good AWD system “bites” into bad surfaces. The SH-AWD does a superb job doing exactly that. If you control the throttle to let the engine and transmission do the pulling, the SH-AWD ensures the MDX stays on poor surfaces without hesitation or failure. When you lose traction or find yourself not completing a turn on these surfaces, a combination of the SH-AWD and Traction Control systems does a nice job gathering the MDX up and composing back onto the road.

The suspension is well balanced – it neither too soft nor too hard. Drive over road imperfections, and it will remind you as to why

the roads are not doing too well this winter. Potholes will not destroy the MDX's gait and motivation. There is minimal roll through the corners, which is good when presented with a full load of passengers. Steering is well weighted through a rather large steering wheel. Turning the MDX provides no delay in reaction and responds quite well.

Braking is actually quite good – even when you engage the anti-lock system in the snow and ice. Pre-braking helps to maintain a sure stop at intersections. Otherwise, these brakes are excellent on regular and panic stops. Pedal feel and action are pretty quick just when you need it. The Advance package adds some great active safety features – such as adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning and collision mitigation system – to keep the MDX on the road through any conditions.

Acura claims an average of 21MPG on SH-AWD models. This is achievable if the weather were warmer and the roads were clear. Extreme winter conditions did put a damper on the fuel consumption average weighing in at 17.3MPG. The high consumption average was up to 19.3MPG before the snow, ice, and temperature drop blew things out of proportion.

The MDX lineup starts off at \$43,185, just about where most three-row mainstream competitors top off price-wise. Keep in mind that this price is only for the front-drive model. Adding the SH-AWD brings the price up another couple of grand. However, this tester is at the top of the range with the Advance and Entertainment packages, totaling at \$57,400.

For that kind of money, you expect to have a stress-free environment that is calming and manages to get you to Point B without any drama. You want an easy-to-use, convenient, and capable vehicle to drive through anything – Polar Vortex or not. You also want space to carry four adults – or a younger family of six – in high luxury and style.

All of this sums up the Acura MDX. It is good where you need it to be. It is great where you expect it to be. Perhaps that is more than enough reason to consider it. ■



Oasis

My day job involves running a Twin Cities nonprofit that helps low-income (read: poor) people connect with lawyers and legal resources. Recently, our accomplishments were featured in a local newspaper article that quoted me repeatedly.

Nowhere in the article is there any reference to me being transgender. When I later asked the reporter if she was even aware of my gender variant status, she answered, “yes.” She then added that it wasn’t relevant to the story about my nonprofit and thus she didn’t include it.

My reaction: *We’ve come a long way, baby!*

At least in the Twin Cities and Minnesota. Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Minnesota each have laws which prohibit discrimination because of someone’s race, ethnicity, sex, gender, and all the other usual characteristics that make people different. Additionally, they’ve made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation—two boxes that I’d check in a Lady Gaga second.

In other words, I live in an oasis with a capital “O.” Yes, it’s also the land of Ten Thousand Snowmen, but it’s an Oasis nonetheless.

Given the breadth of freedom here, it’s easy to forget about the other forty-nine states. Every day, I interact with successful gay and lesbian people—legislators, company owners, doctors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs. It’s nothing to hear about another man’s “hubby” or to see a lesbian gleefully sharing her daughter’s baby picture.

There are at least three area nonprofits that are dedicated to transgender health—physical and emotional. There’s even a bar that trans folk have claimed as their own.

I’m also living proof that it’s not only possible to survive as an “out” trans person, but actually thrive. My nonprofit job takes me into the bastions of traditional older white male privilege—law firms, the judiciary, and corporate America. Most of the people I encounter have never knowingly interacted with a transgender person before me. In nearly thirty months on the job, I can honestly count on three fingers the number of times someone’s used the wrong pronoun.

What makes this even more remarkable is that while I look like a fairly attractive middle-aged woman (we call that “passing”), I can’t get rid of my darn man-voice. Thus, as I’m apt to admit, I’m only “98 percent passable.”

Still, that doesn’t seem to matter to the people who deal with me.

On occasion, I talk to groups about living as a trans person. I recently presented to a large national employer that’s headquartered in Minneapolis with a branch office in, of all places, Montana.

After reminding the audience that transgender people have legal protection in only eighteen states (including the District of Columbia), I offered a hypothetical: what if I worked for the employer and was such a good team member that the employer wanted to transfer me to Montana to head that office? I then asked the audience to consider that I wasn’t “legal” in Montana—without a city or state law to protect trans people like me, a landlord could legally deny me housing; an insurance agent could legitimately refuse to offer me car insurance; and the local gynecologist could safely deem me too exotic to treat.

In other words, someone in power could say, “I don’t like who or what you are and I’m not going to do business with your kind.”

The audience members registered shock. Their collective reaction: Really? Such discrimination—and attendant hatred—are possible today? And absolutely legal?

My answer: *Yup. They sure are.*

With this year’s brutal winter, I’ve given thought to moving somewhere warm.

The problem?

Nowhere south of the Mason-Dixon Line is there a state with laws that protect transgender people. Why would I ever want to move from somewhere that protects me to a place that doesn’t? To a place where hating me is legal?

A year and a half ago, Vice President Biden called the push for transgender equality “the civil rights issue of our time.” Incrementally, we trans people are acquiring rights and protections. I’m confident that in twenty years, we’ll be talking about how most states, if not all, protect transgender folk.

That’s twenty years from now. I may not be around then, but others will be.

As we collectively march toward the goal of legal equality, please share with your family, friends, and most importantly, employers, about how it’s still possible for a landlord to deny housing to a trans person in most of the United States. It’s not right nor is it fair—most people readily understand this, regardless of where they stand on the gender spectrum.

As for me, I’ll stick it out in the Oasis despite the snow, ice, and subzero temps. That’s way better than being kicked out of a warm-weather apartment because I sound like a dude. ■

Ellie Krug is the author of *Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change*. She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com



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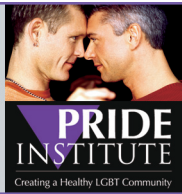


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Swedish Sex Pond

Ever since I got a hot tub, my friends have wrongly assumed that I want to see them naked. When I have a party, they immediately flock to the deck and begin disrobing.

"Stop this at once!" I cry, watching in desperation as a stew of middle-age flesh bobs in the water like a tub full of peeled potatoes. "Don't you people own bathing suits?"

They respond in one of two ways: Some hoist their breasts like pistols and pretend to shoot me with them. (Me! Their hostess, who has spent all afternoon preparing a baked ham and scalloped potatoes.) Or they coolly remind me that being naked in public is perfectly acceptable behavior "in Europe."

"Well, this is the American Middle West," I remind them. "Not some Swedish public sex pond."

I really love my hot tub. I love it more than I love most of my friends. I love it so much that I built a large room around it with floor to ceiling windows so I can use the tub year 'round. When I come home from work, I slip into it with a glass of wine and gaze into my yard at the birds flocking around the feeders and my dogs romping after squirrels. It's so bucolic, pure and peaceful.

But then other people enter the picture and it turns into a scene from a 1970's swingers party. All that's missing is a Mantovani record on the turntable and a bottle of Cold Duck chilling in the foreground.

"Join us, you prude!" they taunt from the water, wiggling their pruney fingers in ghastly invitation. "We won't touch you. Promise."

Thankfully, at this point, they are mostly submerged to their necks. Their flesh is backlit by the tub's underwater green light, making it appear somewhat supernatural. I can imagine that they are merely disembodied heads propped up by alien protoplasm.

But as the wine bottles are drained and someone uses the word "slippery" to explain why she no longer has control of some body part, I know the mood is about to turn kitsch.

Women whose breasts have lived a nunish existence of modesty and constraint are now being carelessly flung about like socks filled with Jello. Inevitably, someone smacks someone else in the face with a breast. After that, things devolve along a predictably disturbing path.

I retreat to the kitchen to busy myself with an incredibly intricate dessert recipe that will remove me from the horror show playing out on my back deck. I think of my former handyman, who lived in a nudist community with his wife. He preached the benefits of a clothesless life so enthusiastically that I decided to give it a try. I lived naked for one day. I did my housework, watched TV, cooked, and even ventured into my fenced yard to feed the birds. And, I must admit, the summer breeze gave me a naughty thrill as it slid across my flesh. But, mostly, living naked didn't make me feel free. It made me feel cold and slightly stupid. And it seemed to depress my dogs.

I keep the hot tub at its warmest setting. I do this because a.) I like hot water and b.) it tends to overheat people quickly, especially when they're vigorously tossing around their breasts. It's not long before my friends climb out of the tub and back into their clothes.

They join me in the kitchen, chatting happily about recipes and work problems. The conversation is so mundane it's hard to believe they've ever seen each other naked. The only evidence to the contrary are the damp spots on their clothes and the steam fogging over the deck's windows. ■

tain since 1994, and is currently president of the Hump Day League, says the leagues support the GLBT community by offering an activity that just about anyone, with any skill level can join. "Bowling is the common denominator and creates an opportunity for LGBT and non-LGBT people to get to know each other. It's also just a nice way of getting to know new people, regardless of orientation, and to network, whether for fun or professional reasons. Our leagues are held in gay-friendly locations, where the staff members are respectful and friendly; where we are free to be who we are."

Sipping my beer, listening to the clash of the pins, and the laughter, it's clear that everyone is having a great time, and the atmosphere is non-intimidating and jovial. Laura agrees and tells me the story of the guy whose bowling style consists of swigging his beer, rolling the ball, and turning to finish the beer before his ball hits the pins.

She points to the staff member at the desk. "You know, if I need all 10 pins reset on my lane, and I'm close enough to the front desk to get Mark's attention, I wave at him and swipe my hand across my fairly supple breast area, indicating to him that I need a "full rack."

I'm pretty convinced by now that even though I'm a terrible bowler, I'd enjoy being a part of one of these leagues, but I have one final question. I've noticed many bowlers wearing strange wrist braces, and am wondering what they're for. Laura has my answer:

"They are wrist supports, used to keep the bowler's wrist from moving or tilting too much during delivery of the ball. I don't use one...looks too complicated to me with all of the straps and dials! I've suggested making them battery operated and using them for other fun stuff...just sayin'."

Pretty sure I get what she's sayin' and pretty sure I'll be a more frequent attendee at bowling nights. ■

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PASSING

Thomas Joseph Kane

Age 64 of
Minneapolis, went
to be with the Lord
on March 22, 2014.
Proceeded in death
by parents, Joseph
and Lorraine
Kane. Survived by
sisters and brother,
Mary Lehtola
(Craig), Kathy
Halseth, Barb Yaeger (Eric) and Patrick
Kane (Kim); as well as many nieces and
nephews: Eric, Dan, Tina, Kevin, Kelly,
Joe, Lindsey, Ryan, Andrey and Bailey. He
was a wonderful brother, uncle, friend and
servant of God. He will be remembered
for his love of cooking, his humor, his
music and his many giving ways. In honor
of Tom, a Celebration of Life will be held
at Cathedral of St. Mark's Episcopal
Church on Friday, April 11 at 4:00pm
with a reception following. Visitation one
hour prior to service. In lieu of flowers,
memorials preferred to St. Mark's Choir.



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Flashes of Light

I don't know how old I am. Maybe three. I'm sitting on shaggy carpet in a dark bedroom. Light pours over me from a bathroom. My mom and dad are there, arguing. She's backed up against a wall. His hands are pressed flat on either side of her. He's screaming. She's screaming. About me. And then, nothing.

This is my first memory.

I don't remember ever living with my father. He moved to Mississippi when I was young to work in security for a company that employed small cruise ships for daytime gambling targeted at senior citizens. My mom divorced him before I knew what "divorce" meant.

I hated when he visited. He was unlike me in every way: a 6'4" former Special Forces operative with a Terminator build and a macho persona to match. He criticized my mother because she spoiled me and let me "act like a sissy." He compared me to his other sons, who were, to me, as tall and as macho as he was. I was the youngest, the shortest, the weakest, and the biggest disappointment. My mom defended me. I was her Pooh Bear, and she allowed me to be myself. She kept me from him as much as she could.

I never had any want to make him proud. I knew that was futile. But I felt like I had to impress him nonetheless, if only because I was afraid, of what, I don't know...

It's May 20, 1998. I'm 11 years old.

I'm sitting with my family in a small hospital waiting room. The room is spectacu-

lar because it looks like it's actually trying to feel generic—fake wood paneling on the walls, dusty rubber plants in the corners, Kmart-framed paintings of pastel flowers.

There is only my family in this room, about seven or eight of us. There's no room for anyone else. A man in a brown suit escorted us here from the ER waiting room. I thought he was taking us back to see my mom.

Earlier that night my mom was on the couch and had something like a seizure. Her body contorted. She moaned as if she were in horrible pain. I threw my arms around her and made her promise me she'd be okay. She turned blue and stopped moving. An ambulance came and swept her away. Now we're here, waiting.

The man in the brown suit reenters the room.

Fast-forward ten minutes and we're all in tears. My grandmother makes noises I haven't heard before, a mix of screaming and sobbing. I'm dizzy. The Kleenex can't go around fast enough. Everyone is hugging me, crying, telling me they love me.

Mom is dead.

Someone in the family calls my father. They tell him Mom's passed away and they hand the phone to me.

"Scooter," my dad calls me by my nickname.

"Hi Daddy."

His voice is unemotional. "You're coming to live with me."

What? No, no, no.

I've just learned my mom is dead. And now this. Unthinkably insensitive.

My mind jumps back and forth between my mom jerking around on the couch, struggling for air, and me in a football helmet trying to make my dad proud. "You're gonna be a man, son," I can hear him say. He'll force me away from doing anything I want to do—no more playing dress up, no more bedtime stories, kisses on my forehead, or the smell of Mom's perfume. I'll be a prisoner to his idea of masculinity.

I want to cower behind my Mom and cry. Please, god, no. No, no, no.

I take the phone away from my face. I want to throw up. I whisper, terrified, to my grandmother, "Daddy said I have to live with him."

My grandmother takes the phone and clears her throat.

"Now, Jerry," she says, "He's going to stay right where he is." Her voice goes mute. Everything does. I see everyone around me writhing in pain but I can't hear them. Is this really happening?

Flash: Mom on the couch, moaning. Flash: Mom holding me in a rocking chair, singing to me. Flash: Dad yelling at me to "man up." Flash: Dad forcing me into football pads, happy that he can finally make a man of me.

Flash: I'm on a shaggy carpet, watching them argue. They're fighting about me. About who gets to keep me...

I moved in with my grandmother the next day. ■

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